

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2419, which the clerk will report.

The clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 3500, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Dorgan/Grassley) amendment No. 3508 (to amendment No. 3500), to strengthen payment limitations and direct the savings to increased funding for certain programs.

Reid amendment No. 3509 (to amendment No. 3508), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3510 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3500), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3511 (to amendment No. 3510), to change the enactment date.

Motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 3512.

Reid amendment No. 3512 (to the instructions of the motion to commit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3513 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3514 (to amendment No. 3513), to change the enactment date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, we are back on the farm bill. To refresh memories, we have now been on the farm bill 10 days. This is our tenth day. Not one vote has occurred. We have tried time and again to bring up amendments, and they have been objected to. I will attempt to do that again this morning. I will wait until my ranking member is present. I see that Senator SALAZAR is here to speak on the farm bill.

I wish to make it very clear, tomorrow morning we will have a vote on

cloture on the farm bill. I want there to be no mistake in anyone's mind: Tomorrow morning's vote will be a vote on whether we have a farm bill this year. If we get cloture on the farm bill tomorrow, we will have a farm bill this year. We will be able to pass a bill in the Senate, we will go to conference, and we will send it to the President.

If we do not get cloture tomorrow, that is like killing the farm bill. A vote against cloture will be a vote to kill the farm bill. We will run out of time. We will be out of here at Thanksgiving for 2 weeks. When we come back, we have all the appropriations bills to do, we have the Iraq funding bill to work out, and we will only have about 3 weeks before Christmas. Therefore, if we do not get cloture, that is like saying we don't want a farm bill. So I hope everyone understands what the stakes are.

I also hope no one has the mistaken impression that because we invoke cloture, they cannot offer amendments. I got that question from a press person this morning. I had to inform them that, no, if we get cloture, we have 30 hours of debate and people can offer amendments during that 30 hours.

I just spoke with our leader. It would be the prerogative, if we wanted to on the majority side, if we got cloture, to lay down one amendment and take all 30 hours and debate it and block everybody from offering amendments. That has happened around here before, by the way, where we get cloture and then block it and nobody gets to offer any amendments until the end. Then we get into this vote-arama where we have votes on amendments but nobody gets to talk about them. We are not going to do that.

If we get cloture, I will try to reach an agreement with my ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, so we can have, say, at least a half hour debate on every amendment and vote. That would give us a shot at having probably pretty close to 20 amendments that could be debated and on which we could vote.

At the end of the 30 hours, of course, any amendments still pending have a right to have a vote. There would be a minute on each side to explain those amendments, and we would vote on them.

I want to make it clear that voting for cloture does not cut off amendments. Yes, it may cut off nongermane amendments dealing with whether we are going to go to the Moon or Mars or whether we are going to do wacky stuff such as that. Yes, it cuts that stuff out. But any amendment that is germane to the farm bill can be offered and will be voted on even after cloture. I want to make that very clear.

If we do not get cloture, that is it; that is the end of the ball game, and I don't know when we can ever come back to the farm bill after that. Certainly not this year.

It is getting late. The crops are in. In most parts of the country, crops are in.

And now they are beginning to think about next year. Bankers want to know, farmers need to know what the program is going to be for next year. Will it be this one or will it be what we have come up with in our farm bill and worked out with the House. So it is getting very late, and we need to get this bill done.

I encourage all Senators, we are open for business now. We can take amendments now. We can debate amendments, and we can vote on amendments all day today.

Shortly, I will be asking consent to bring up amendments. I am going to ask consent to bring up Republican amendments that are filed. I have a Lugar amendment. I have a Roberts amendment, an Alexander amendment, a Lott amendment, and I am going to be asking consent to bring up those amendments. If there is no objection, we will bring them up, have a debate, and we can have votes on a lot of amendments this afternoon.

I want to make it very clear again: This side is not holding up the process. We want to vote; we want to debate. Just as yesterday, I wanted to bring up five amendments yesterday and have limited time and vote on them, but it was objected to. I will try that again today. Hopefully, maybe we can make some movement and we can have some votes today on some amendments. I will be doing that shortly.

I see the Senator from Colorado is on the Senate floor. He has been a great member of our Agriculture Committee. No one has worked harder than Senator SALAZAR in getting us to the point where we have a farm bill that came out of our committee without one negative vote.

I say to my friend from Colorado, someone this morning on a press call asked me: If you don't get cloture, if you don't get this bill, or if the President vetoes it and you have to go back, what are you going to do differently?

I said: I don't know how much we can do differently to get more of a positive vote out of our committee than a unanimous vote. What do you do that is different from that? It is not as if we had a split vote on the committee and we still have to work it out. We didn't have one dissenting vote, so I am not certain how we get much better than that.

I thank my friend from Colorado for all of his hard work on this bill. He was instrumental in a number of issues before the committee, especially on energy, on conservation. The Senator from Colorado was instrumental in working out the agreements and making sure we had a bill that got a unanimous vote out of our committee. I thank him for that.

He has been a champion of ranchers and farmers, a real champion of moving us ahead in energy, in renewable energy, farm-based energy, bio-based energy, which will get us off the Mid-east oil pipeline that we have been on for far too long.

Again, I thank my friend from Colorado for all of his hard work. With him, I am hoping we can get cloture on this bill tomorrow and move ahead and go to conference and get a bill we can send to the President. I thank my friend from Colorado for all of his help in getting this farm bill here.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I come here again, some 10 days after we brought the farm bill here to the floor, and I want to say first of all to my good friend from Iowa, the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, TOM HARKIN, that there are few people who really understand the importance of rural America and agriculture in the way TOM HARKIN does. There are very few people on the floor of the Senate today who can claim they still live in the same house in which they were born. Few people here can say they know the pain and suffering and the challenges, the hopes, and the optimism of rural America in the way TOM HARKIN does.

The best of what we have here in the Senate today we see in someone like TOM HARKIN, who is here for the right reasons—standing up as a champion for agriculture, for rural America, and for America in general because he understands what is at stake. He understands that the food security of the Nation is at stake. Senator HARKIN understands what is going on with respect to the oil addiction of America and foreign oil and the importance of American farmers and ranchers helping us to grow our way to energy independence. Senator HARKIN understands how important it is to be a champion of the most vulnerable in our society by having the kind of nutrition programs that will put fruits and vegetables and other kinds of healthy foods in the stomachs of our children as they are trying to learn. Senator HARKIN understands the importance of standing up and fighting for our land and for our water and making sure farmers and ranchers across America, who are some of the best stewards of our lands and water, have the right tools so that we have a conservation ethic that is appropriate at the dawn of this 21st century.

So I say this to my friend from Iowa: I applaud his efforts in bringing us to this point. This has been an effort which is not one we dreamt up overnight to bring to the floor of the Senate just 10 days ago; it is an effort that has consumed thousands upon thousands of hours, with hearings all over the country. And it was not only Senator HARKIN and his leadership, but it was also Senator CHAMBLISS, working as the ranking member alongside Senator HARKIN, trying to get us to a point where we had a farm bill we could bring to the floor of the Senate.

At the end of the day, there are not many votes on major bills that come out of committee on a voice vote. We had Democrats and Republicans saying

this is a good farm bill. This is the way for the future. So I am very hopeful that tomorrow morning at 9, 9:30, 10 o'clock, when we come to the floor, we take the lead of Senator HARKIN and our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, and vote yes on the cloture motion before us. It is important that we move forward in that direction.

I will remind my colleagues—as Senator HARKIN already has reminded our colleagues—that even though we get to cloture tomorrow morning, we will still have an opportunity to go through a number of amendments. We have another 30 hours of debate and multiple amendments that can be considered and many votes that can be had as we move forward to try to improve upon the product of the Agriculture Committee. But if we don't get cloture tomorrow, we are, in fact, endangering the prospect of even getting to the farm bill.

Now, we have some people who may say that what is happening here in the Senate is that there is a stall underway, a stall to keep us from getting to action on a very important piece of legislation for America. That may very well be true. But if those who are trying to stall this important measure have their way, then those voices that need champions, those voices in rural America, those farmers and ranchers, those who care about food security, they will be the ultimate losers in this debate.

I don't think today in my State of Colorado, on the eastern plains or the San Luis Valley or the Western Slope or in Weld County, CO, the farmers and ranchers or those rural communities really understand what is going on here, but what they should understand is we will have an opportunity in the vote we will have here tomorrow morning to make a determination as to whether the farm bill moves forward. So for those who vote yes, they are saying they feel we do need a farm bill for America. For those who say no, whatever their motivation might be, they are saying we should not and that we should allow this very important issue to take a secondary seat. So I ask for those voices that care so much about what we have done in this farm bill to rise and make sure Members of this Chamber know of the importance of getting cloture tomorrow morning so that we can move forward on the farm bill.

Over the last several weeks, I have spoken often here on the floor regarding the farm bill, and I have spoken about the importance of this farm bill with respect to its imperative direction in producing healthy and safe foods here in America. It is a vital piece of legislation that will provide us with clean, renewable energy and be a keystone in a clean energy economy of the 21st century. It is vital to fighting the hunger we see among our school children and hunger that still affects millions of Americans. It is vital to our

rural communities, in making sure we give them an opportunity to stand on their feet again. It is vital to our farmers and to our ranchers and to their very livelihood.

This morning I want to speak to a part of the farm bill which is important, and that is conservation, the part of the farm bill that deals with fighting for and protecting our land and our water. Senator HARKIN and others have been champions of this aspect of the farm bill, and I applaud them for their efforts.

The bill we have brought to the floor does more for conservation than any farm bill in the entire history of the United States. It does more for conservation than any bill in the entire history of the United States. So for all of those Americans who care about how we take care of our land and water, it is important that they have their voices heard on getting this farm bill moving forward.

The farm bill has an enormous impact on this Nation's land and water. Non-Federal agricultural and forest lands occupy 1.4 billion—that is billion, not million, 1.4 billion—acres or nearly 70 percent of the lands of the 48 contiguous States. Mr. President, 7 out of 10 acres in the United States of America, in the 48 contiguous States, are affected by this farm bill. These lands provide the habitat and corridors of support for healthy wildlife populations, they filter our groundwater supplies, they regulate surface water flows, sequester carbon, and provide the open space and vistas that make America a place we all love. As I learned from working for a long part of my life on a ranch and farm in southern Colorado, farmers and ranchers are some of the best stewards of these resources. Farmers and ranchers want to take care of their land, and they want to do what is right for the protection of our environment.

The conservation programs that are in this farm bill reauthorize what are already some programs that are making a major contribution to the land stewardship challenges of the last half century.

In 1982, not so long ago, widespread soil erosion was degrading water quality in rivers and streams and putting dust in the air at dangerously high levels. But since 1982, with the Conservation Reserve Program, the EQIP program, and their predecessor programs, total erosion on U.S. cropland has fallen by more than 43 percent. Since 1992, total erosion on U.S. cropland has fallen by more than 43 percent. We are succeeding, and we can make more progress.

The investments we make in the Conservation Reserve Program, which puts environmentally sensitive croplands into conservation uses, results in the following: First, \$266 million annually in environmental benefits from reduced sediment loads in streams and rivers, \$51 million annually from reduced dust and wind, and \$161 million annually from increased soil productivity.

Here is a picture that the Natural Resources Conservation Service sent to me a few days ago from Colorado. This shows how some of our conservation dollars are spent.

I wish to thank Allan Green, our State conservationist, and Tim Carney, our assistant State conservationist, for helping us with this effort on conservation. And I thank all the staff, all the dedicated staff of NRCS, who dedicate their hearts and souls to making sure America's farmers and ranchers are doing the best they can on conservation.

This is a picture of some of my friends and colleagues in the Saint Vrain and Boulder Creek watersheds. What these farmers and ranchers are learning here behind the tractor, working with NRCS, is how to work on watersheds with some of the new practices that have come into play in farming and ranching over the last several decades which will allow them to reduce their tillage, to reduce their consumption of energy as they are tilling those lands, and at the same time to increase the yields in their fields.

The field day, which is depicted here in this program, was part of a 3-year EQIP conservation innovation grant that was done in partnership with the local conservation district, local farmers, seed companies, and farm equipment dealers. At the end of the day, these farmers went home with new ways to reduce erosion and to boost their bottom line.

The conservation program we are authorizing in the farm bill today also helps us protect the very wetlands of America that are so valuable to hunters and to anglers, to wildlife watchers, and to those of us who care so much about the beauty of this place. Indeed, for those of us who come from a natural resources background, we know that more than half of all of the species of wildlife essentially reside around these wetlands and river corridors of our Nation. So what we do with this farm bill in terms of the protection of wetlands and continuing the Wetlands Reserve Program is very important to all those who care about hunting, who are the anglers of our Nation, and who care about making sure we are protecting our wildlife.

Starting in the mid-1950s, we were losing over half a million acres of wetlands every year—half a million acres of wetlands. To put it into perspective so that people will understand, it is like losing the same amount of acreage that makes up all of the District of Columbia every year. Thanks in large part to the Wetlands Reserve Program and CRP, we have achieved the goal of having no net loss—no net loss—from agriculture. In fact, from 1997 to 2003 in that 6-year period, we had a net gain of 260,000 acres of wetlands here in America.

This is a picture of the Wetlands Reserve Program project near Berthoud, along the Front Range, north of Denver. WRP funded 70 percent of the

\$12,000—70 percent of the \$12,000—it took to restore this wetland. You can see what great waterfowl habitat and nesting areas it created along the shoreline. When you look at this beautiful picture—and, yes, I happen to live in the State which is the crown jewel of the Nation in terms of its beauty—you see the mountains, the snow-capped Rockies in the background, but you also see part of what makes Colorado such a wonderful place; that is, the agriculture that feeds into this wetland and a wetland that has now been restored to provide the valuable wildlife and water quality values I addressed a few minutes ago.

This farm bill and the Wetlands Reserve Program is part of what is at stake on this vote that we take tomorrow morning, on whether we move forward with the farm bill.

At the end of 2005, nationwide we had 1.8 million acres enrolled in the WRP. We had 2 million acres of wetlands and buffer zones in the area that were enrolled in CRP. This is great for the bird watchers, for the anglers, for the hunters. CRP alone yields about \$737 million a year in wildlife-related benefits.

The conservation program in the farm bill also helps ensure that we have healthy ranges and that animal waste does not harm water quality. Here is an example of EQIP, along Pawnee Creek near the Colorado-Wyoming border. EQIP provided about \$3,000—around 50 percent of the project cost—to install this water tank for livestock. This tank is part of a grazing system with a stock well, a pipeline system, and cross fencing that facilitates rotational grazing.

For those of us who come from the West, we understand the importance of water. I often say, for us in the West, we all recognize that water is the lifeblood of our community. Without the waters of the streams and rivers and aquifers in my great State, we would continue still to be the great American desert. It is important we take care of our water in the right way. We know that, it is part of our heritage in the State of Colorado. EQIP is representing these ranchers, making sure we are taking care of a very precious resource.

As this picture shows, a small investment from EQIP results in more balanced grazing, less erosion, improved water quality, and improved wildlife habitats.

I see my friend from New York is here. I have probably 4 or 5 more minutes to go. Through the Chair, I say I will continue to speak but to let him know I have probably another 5 or 10 minutes on the farm bill, and I will yield the floor to my friend from New York.

This is a picture of an irrigation ditch. Through the improvements made on the irrigation ditch, it will make sure there is less water loss along this ditch so water can be more efficiently and more effectively applied on the soil that will be irrigated from this ditch.

I could speak for a long time about the benefits of the Conservation Re-

serve Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, the Grassland Reserve Program, and many other programs we are reauthorizing in the farm bill. You see the benefits of the farm bill and the programs in this legislation throughout my State of Colorado. From my native San Luis Valley in the south to the Yampa River Valley in the north, they have made an immeasurable difference over the last two decades.

I am proud this farm bill reauthorizes these programs and invests \$4.4 billion in conservation, a record amount in conservation. The growing pressures on agricultural lands make it all the more important that we pass a farm bill with a strong conservation title. I wish to again applaud Chairman HARKIN, Ranking Member CHAMBLISS, and Senator BAUCUS, the chairman of the Finance Committee, as well as Chairman GRASSLEY, for their contribution—the members of both committees who have brought a great farm bill to the floor of the Senate. I hope we can get beyond the roadblocks that some Members have placed before this legislation. We need to pass this bill for the good of America.

Finally, again, I think we need more people in the Senate who understand the importance of this farm bill. We need more people who understand the food security of our Nation should not be imperiled.

That sign on my desk that says “no farms, no food,” is something we ought to be hitting everybody over the head with every day, as we deal with this very important part of our legislative responsibilities, to make sure we have the food security we so need in this country.

We also need to make sure, on this floor, there are people who have a strong voice for those farmers and ranchers who work very hard every day, in a way that you only know when you have worked on a farm or a ranch, to make sure we have that food security for America. For most people in America, when you are out there at work and it is 5 or 6 o'clock, you look at your clock and it is time to go home. If you are a farmer or rancher and you look at your watch and it is 5 or 6 o'clock, more than likely you have another 4 or 5 hours to go.

Then, when you get home, you know you have probably 5 or 6 hours' sleep before you have to get up and make sure you are milking the cows, if you are a dairy farmer, or make sure you are out checking the calves that are being born on the spring days or that the water is being changed at the right time so you are not wasting water, at 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning. It is a hard life out there on the farm. It is a hard life out in rural America. It is important this Senate stand up strong and say yes to rural America, yes to rural communities that want to rebuild themselves, yes to the future of our energy security as we grow our way to

energy independence, yes to the future of our nutritional programs for America, yes to the future of those who want to protect the land and water of America.

This is the right bill. It is important for people to come to the floor of this Chamber tomorrow morning and to cast their vote "yes" on the cloture motion before us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me thank my colleague from Colorado for, as always, his excellent remarks. One of the many things he does for our Senate and our Democratic caucus in particular is constantly remind us of the problems in rural America. He has a link, coming from a great family tradition in rural America, a farming tradition, a tradition that has gone back centuries. When he speaks on these issues, many of us from more urbanized States listen. I thank him for his courtesy. Not that we don't have great farmers in New York—we do.

I am here to talk on a different subject. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE PRIME LENDING CRISIS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the subprime lending crisis and the plan we are executing to address the foreclosure wave that threatens home ownership and our broader economy. Rampant predatory lending practices across this Nation have left millions of American homeowners stuck with unaffordable and unfair subprime loans. As a result, 2 million families now face the prospect of foreclosure and the loss of their homes over the next 2 years unless we take action. The number is going to get worse because the loans that were made in 2006 and this year, 2007, usually do not reset until 2008 and 2009. Because so many people who accepted these loans—took these loans—were taken advantage of, the interest rate will skyrocket for them. Many of them will not be able to afford it.

Foreclosures entail not only direct costs to the lenders and borrowers but also high spillover costs that are felt by neighboring homeowners, communities, and local governments in the form of lower home values, lost property tax revenue, and increased maintenance costs. A recent report by the majority staff of the Joint Economic Committee estimated that each foreclosure can cost \$227,000 in direct and indirect costs. That is astounding. The homes on a street or in a neighborhood that has had foreclosures often go down in value. Even if you are perfectly safe, even if you have already paid your mortgage and have no intention of taking out another one, you are at risk because of this foreclosure crisis, in terms of the value of your home.

The numbers mean that if the housing market slump continues through

the next 2 years, as many economists estimate, approximately \$103 billion in housing wealth will be destroyed as these homes are foreclosed on; \$103 billion in lost wealth at a time when our families can least afford it.

In addition, States and local governments will lose nearly \$1 billion in property tax revenue over the next 2 years as a result of the destruction of housing wealth caused by subprime foreclosures. That is \$1 billion less funding for public schools and public safety, and that is the direct property tax loss. We are not talking about the other losses States and local governments will see as a result of the broader economic impact of the crisis.

We are not talking about the financial burden that cities and towns all over the Nation will face to maintain vacant properties and to prevent crime near abandoned homes. We are also not talking about cost to the larger economy. When home values go down because of this crisis, consumers spend less. Consumer spending has been the engine of this economy. It accounts for about 70 percent of our GDP. Statistics show when home values go down, consumers spend less. So this is ricocheting from one end of the economy to the other. Again, even if you live in your home and paid off your mortgage, you will be affected by this unless we act.

The frustrating thing is we know what to do here. We cannot make this crisis go away; there is no magic wand. It took years of neglect, years of ideological aversion to even commonsense regulation of the now-unregulated mortgage brokers. But the frustrating thing—frustrating for this Member who has been talking about this for a long time—is we know what to do. This administration, when it comes to the subprime crisis, has remained like an ostrich with its head in the sand, not paying attention. Why? Why don't they see what everyone else sees?

The reason is quite simple. We have ideologues who run this administration. Their view is Government should never be involved. Let the homeowner pay the price. Let the economy pay the price. Because to get the Government involved is bad.

They can't prove that; that is their ideology. If there were ever a time when we needed some thoughtful, careful, moderate but directed Government intervention—not to bail out anybody; those people will pay the price, you read it in the financial pages of the newspapers right now—but to help our Nation out of this crisis at a time when other things such as high oil prices are hitting, makes eminent sense. The time to act is now, while we still have a chance to save these homes and strengthen our floundering housing market.

I am proud to say today that my colleagues, we in the Senate, will have an opportunity to act and take action on two measures that are designed to use the tools of the Federal Government to

assist in helping the 2 million subprime borrowers facing foreclosures with alternatives for loan workouts, refinancings, and modifications. I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will agree with us that these actions are urgently necessary. To wait even 3 or 4 months will have this crisis grow in problems for those homeowners whose mortgages go up, for those financial institutions that have the mortgages but, to a far greater extent, to our economy—neighbors affected and consumer spending.

I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join us in helping take the urgent action that is needed now—not next month, not in February but now.

First, we will take action to pass the FHA modernization bill. This legislation makes several important changes to FHA, including adjustments to its downpayment requirements, loan limits, and underwriting standards to give the FHA more flexibility to assist subprime borrowers with safe and sustainable refinancing alternatives before their loans reset to unaffordable rates. With these changes, FHA will be able to rescue tens of thousands of American families from the financial ruin of foreclosure.

The legislation will also make improvements to FHA's counseling and foreclosure prevention programs to ensure that borrowers who have already faced the specter of the loss of their home will not have to go through the ordeal again. The FHA legislation is modest. It has bipartisan support. It has the support of the administration. What are we waiting for?

Second, we are pushing the passage of the PROMISE Act, a bill to temporarily increase the portfolio caps on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac by their regulator.

This is legislation I have introduced, along with Congressman FRANK in the House. The bill will alleviate the predicted wave of foreclosures by giving Freddie and Fannie 10 percent more balance sheet capacity. But it does not just give them the balance sheet capacity and say: Do what you want with it; we hope some will go to help avoid foreclosures through refinancings.

We say 85 percent of that increase must be dedicated to assisting subprime borrowers who are stuck in risky adjustable rate mortgages. The legislation is based on the premise that in troubled market times like these, when private firms are unwilling or incapable of providing the financing necessary to help subprime borrowers, it is appropriate and necessary for the government-sponsored enterprises to step in and provide liquidity. This is why we have GSEs. They are quasi-private, quasi-public. They have a certain and special responsibility when the Nation's economy is at risk. They are not the same as any private company whose job is to make money for its owners or its stockholders. But at the same time, they have the expertise of

the private sector and the clout of the private sector to get something done in an efficient and directed way.

We have all heard that GSEs are the only game in town when it comes to secondary market trading, due to profound distrust of credit quality and rampant uncertainty about the rating agencies. We have to use the liquidity GSEs provide to target those subprime borrowers in need of a way to save their homes.

What is frustrating is the administration is opposed to this legislation because they do not like Fannie and Freddie. They say: Let the markets take care of this in their own way. That is a lesson that was widely accepted in the 1890s and to some extent in the 1920s, but this is 2007. We know thoughtful, well-thought-out Government intervention, in a careful way, works and is needed. We also know if we do not have it, the booms and busts of the economy and to individuals will be far greater, and starting with Woodrow Wilson and then with Franklin Roosevelt and with Democratic and Republican Presidents alike since World War II, we have learned that at times Government intervention is called for, particularly when the private sector is unable to act. In this case, the private sector is clearly unable to act.

Over the coming weeks, we also plan to pass \$200 million in the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill for housing counseling organizations that specialize in foreclosure prevention. Here is another problem. A homeowner, and many of the homeowners who are in foreclosure or about to go in foreclosure, these are homeowners who could qualify for prime loans, but they were taken advantage of by rapacious mortgage brokers. And now they are stuck. But they are not really stuck, they have a revenue stream.

People I have met, Mr. Ruggiero, the late Mr. Ruggiero, a subway motor-man; Ms. Diaz, a clerk at a hospital for 35 years with a pension, they have the income. Mr. Ruggiero of Queens, Ms. Diaz of Staten Island, they have the income to refinance. The trouble is there is no one there to help them do it. They cannot do it on their own.

There are no banks. Banks do not do this stuff in good part anymore. There are nonprofits, able, dedicated, capable, knowledgeable nonprofits that could come right in and fill the lurch.

Now, you, Mr. President, the Senator from Ohio, and the Senator from Pennsylvania, and I were able to persuade Senator MURRAY who, in her wisdom and always willingness to help, put first \$100 million, then \$200 million into the appropriations bill for housing counseling organizations that can provide this help.

At a cost of as little as a few hundred dollars per borrower, housing counselors can prevent foreclosure that results in economic loss of \$227,000 direct and indirect, on average. This is a highly cost-effective investment. We urge the administration not to veto

this emergency funding when the Senate passes it. If it is vetoed, and this crisis gets worse, a portion of the blame, a good portion, will be at the President's doorstep, plain and simple.

I hope the President will not veto it. Most everyone who has looked at this legislation says it is needed. If we can do these three things—FHA reform, lifting the portfolio caps for Fannie and Freddie, and money for housing counseling—we will not end the subprime crisis, it is too deep already. But we can abate it, and we can get our country focused on moving again economically and on to so many other problems that face us.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. I think this would be an opportune time to pass the farm bill. Does anybody object?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. CONRAD. Look, we obviously are not going to do that, take advantage of this situation. But I must say, I am tempted after days and days of not being able to consider amendments on the farm bill that is critically important to this Nation's economy.

We got the bill through the Agriculture Committee without a single dissenting vote. Twenty-one members of the Senate serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee. That is over one-fifth of the Senate. After months of difficult negotiations we reached conclusion.

Now we are in this circumstance in which people want to offer amendments on everything from the *Exxon Valdez* to medical malpractice to immigration to labor issues to a whole series of things that have nothing to do with the farm bill.

Now, we all understand that very often hundreds of amendments are filed on major bills that Senators have no intention of actually offering. Certainly, we know there are hundreds of amendments filed on this bill. But I say to my colleagues, this has now gone on for 10 days. We have not considered one amendment. We have not considered a single amendment.

At some point, one would hope there would be an accommodation. Typically, in a situation like this, the accommodation is that a certain number of amendments are offered by each side.

That list is agreed to, entered into the RECORD, and votes are held. Typically on a farm bill there are about 20 amendments voted on, 20, 22, 24. We

could have been done with this bill by now. We could have been finished in the Senate. Then we would be in the conference committee to work out the differences between the House and Senate. But we are where we are.

The reasonable way out of this is to proceed as Senator REID offered last night. I heard him clearly. He said we would take only five amendments on this side. If they need more amendments on their side, he is open to considering their amendments, even some of them nonrelevant. He made very clear he would accept a certain number that are nonrelevant. I ask our colleagues on the other side, can't you come up with a list of amendments that you absolutely have to have voted on, including those nonrelevant amendments that you believe you have to have a vote on? Can't you do that? Couldn't we enter that into the RECORD and conclude work on this farm bill?

Why is it important? Why does this farm bill matter? First, because we have a food policy in this country that is making a difference. How do we know that? Here is the first way we know it. Who pays the least for food in the world? It is our country. The numbers are very clear. We spend 10 percent of our disposable income on food; 5.8 percent is spent on food eaten at home; 4.1 percent is spent on food eaten away from home. So of the 10 percent of our disposable income that goes for food, about 60 percent of that is food eaten at home, so about 6 percent.

The comparable figure in these other countries is Japan, 14 percent of their income goes for food eaten at home; France, 15 percent; China, 26 percent; Philippines, 38 percent; Indonesia, 55 percent. There is no country that comes even close to ours in terms of the percentage of income going for food eaten at home. Even when you factor in food eaten outside the home, we are far less than any other country in the world.

Of course, as the Chair knows well, the distinguished Senator from Colorado, who is such a valued member of the Agriculture Committee, who also is an important member of the Finance Committee, these are not only agriculture provisions, these are provisions that come from the Finance Committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, provisions to provide an incentive to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. This bill is called the Food and Energy Security Act because it looks to both, and both are critically important. Agriculture is one place where we still export more than we import, one of the few places in the economy where that is true. On energy, it is one place where we could actually help dramatically reduce our dependence on foreign oil. It has been done in a fiscally responsible way.

I hear the news broadcasts. I see what is written in some of the press. It is amazing that they don't have the basic facts of this legislation, and they don't present them to the American people.

Let me show this chart. Commodity programs, which are a small fraction of this bill, are the support programs for the major commodities in this country. They draw all the criticism, all the heat. The fact is, commodity program costs are going way down. This red line shows what the Congressional Budget Office estimated would be the cost of commodity programs when the last farm bill was written. This red line is what they estimated the farm program would cost, the commodity parts of the farm bill. But look at what has actually happened. We are well below their estimates, not only for the current farm bill but look at the estimates going forward. The costs of the commodity program are down dramatically from the past farm bill, from the projections that were made at the time the last farm bill was written. As a share of total Federal spending, it is also down.

According to estimates when the last farm bill was written, the total farm bill passed in 2002 would take 2.33 percent of total Federal spending and the commodity programs would take .75 of 1 percent. Now as we look to this new farm bill and what the Congressional Budget Office is saying—these are not my numbers or Ag Committee numbers—they say the Food and Energy Security Act costs will be down to less than 2 percent of total Federal spending. In fact, 1.87 percent of total Federal spending. And the commodity programs, the things that draw the controversy, are down to one-quarter of 1 percent of total Federal spending.

I have not seen that statistic written in a single Washington Post column. I have not seen it on any of the television broadcasts, not one. They are supposed to be giving the American people the information they need upon which to base a decision, and they are not telling people that the farm program is being reduced as a share of Federal spending or the commodity program is one-third of what it was estimated to be when the last farm bill was written. I don't see a single column telling the American people that fact. I don't see a single broadcast that allows that fact to be told to the American people. The Food and Energy Security Act as a share of total Federal spending is going down, not up. The commodity programs are going down, not up, as a share of total Federal spending.

The other thing they seem to forget about is where does the money go? This pie chart shows where it is going. Almost two-thirds of the money, 66 percent, is going for nutrition. That is not just farm States; that is in every State. Every State has school lunch. Every State has food stamps. Every State has food banks. Every State, every community benefits by the nutrition spending in this bill. It is nearly two-thirds of the total. I don't see that reported by a single news source. I haven't seen any of them report that basic fact. I haven't seen any of them

say 9 percent of the money is going for conservation of natural resources. That is money that goes to every State of the Nation. I don't see any of them reporting that less than 14 percent of the money is going for commodity programs.

The fact is, this legislation is important to the Nation. It is important to the agriculture sector, no doubt, but it is also critically important to our energy security to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. It is critically important to our economy. It is critically important to our continuing competitiveness, because the Europeans, our major competitors, are spending more than three times as much to provide support to their producers as we provide to ours. What are we supposed to say to our producers? You go out there and compete against the French and the German farmer, and while you are at it, go compete against the French Government and the German Government too. That is not a fair fight. Our farmers and ranchers can take on anybody. They are happy to compete against the French and the Germans. But they can't be expected to take on the French Government and the German Government as well. That is exactly what is happening in world agriculture. The Europeans are providing three times as much direct support to their producers as we provide ours. That is a fact. Those are not my numbers. Those are the numbers from the OECD, the international scorekeeper that keeps track of competitive positions.

What happens if we pull the rug out from under our producers when they are faced already with a more than 3-to-1 disadvantage going up against our biggest competitors? What happens? Two words: Mass bankruptcy. That is what would happen. Farm income would plummet in this country. Cash flow would dry up. Farm and ranch families would be forced off the land. America would experience in agriculture what we have already experienced in so many other economic sectors. We would become dependent on the kindness of strangers for our food. We are already dependent on the kindness of strangers for our money because we are borrowing so much money, because we are not being fiscally responsible. We already are dependent for 60 percent of our energy on foreign countries. Sixty percent of our oil comes from abroad. We are headed for 70 percent on energy if we fail to act.

The Food and Energy Security Act is one place we could make a meaningful difference in reducing our dependence on foreign oil. Why? Because it encourages and provides incentives for the development of ethanol, and ethanol not just from corn but ethanol from cellulose, things such as switchgrass and wood fiber. Because we know we cannot attain the goals this Congress and this President have set for the country in alternative fuels by only relying on corn for ethanol. We will have to have

a breakthrough on the use of cellulosity. There are other provisions to encourage the use of biodiesel fuel as well as ethanol.

We look around the world. We don't have to look far to see other countries that have made significant progress in reducing their dependence on foreign oil by looking at alternative fuels. Look at the case of Brazil. Brazil, a number of years ago, was 80 percent dependent on foreign energy. Just as we are 60 percent on foreign energy today, they were 80 percent dependent. Today they are on the brink of energy independence. That is startling. They have gone from 80 percent dependence on foreign energy to virtual energy independence. They have done it over a 20-year period. They have done it by focusing on ethanol and flexible fuel vehicles, and what a difference it is making to their country. Look at their economy. It is soaring. Think how different our country would be if instead of spending \$270 billion a year importing foreign energy we were spending that money here at home, helping to grow our way out of this energy crisis. We could do it. Instead of maintaining this dependence on the Middle East, how about looking to the Midwest? How about having a circumstance in which a President could wake up in the morning and know he didn't have to worry or she didn't have to worry about what was going to happen in the Middle East and how that might threaten the energy security of our country, because that person might know we no longer were dependent on Saudi Arabia, on Kuwait, on Venezuela; that instead we were able to produce the energy here at home.

This isn't a fantasy. It is a possibility. But it is only going to happen if we take steps. Some of the steps that are needed to be taken are in this legislation, this legislation that is going nowhere over some argument that the other side ought to be able to offer a whole bunch of amendments on things that have absolutely nothing to do with food and energy security. Medical malpractice, *Exxon Valdez*, the alternative minimum tax—those have nothing to do with the farm bill. But those are amendments that are pending on the other side.

A final point I want to make is from an article in the Wall Street Journal from September 28 of this year. The headline of this chart is "Farm Productivity Spurs Global Economy."

Somehow, something has happened in this country. We have forgotten about our roots. We have forgotten about where we came from. We have forgotten about what has helped America be strong. Right at the core of our strength and our success has been an incredibly productive agricultural sector—farm and ranch families all across this country who have dramatically increased their productivity through technology and through their own good work.

But look at what it means not just to us but around the world. This, again, is

from the Wall Street Journal of September:

The prospect for a long boom is riveting economists because the declining real price of grain has long been one of the unsung forces behind the development of the global economy. Thanks to steadily improving seeds, synthetic fertilizer and more powerful farm equipment, the productivity of farmers in the West and Asia has stayed so far ahead of population growth that prices of corn and wheat, adjusted for inflation, had dropped 75 percent and 69 percent, respectively, since 1974. Among other things, falling grain prices made food more affordable for the world's poor, helping shrink the percentage of the world's population that is malnourished.

How did all this happen? If the farm policy of this country, which is the dominant agricultural producer in the world, is so flawed—as is repeated hour after hour by every broadcast station in this country and repeated in newspaper column after newspaper column—how is it we have had this incredible success and it has gone completely or virtually unnoticed by the major media? Could it be that maybe they have not done a very good job of telling the American people the full story? Could it be that they have been so eager to find fault with every corner and every piece of farm legislation because they kind of at heart look down on people who work the land? I hate to say it, but I think now we are getting at the truth. I think there is a deep arrogance among some about people—farm and ranch families—who are out there, and they want to somehow believe they are superior to them. They want to believe they are farming the mailbox and that there are all these endless abuses.

It is fascinating, if there are all these endless abuses, why do the reform proposals that have been presented and have been suggested raise so little money? If there is this rampant abuse, as is presented in the popular media, why do all the measures to reform the system save so little money? How could that be? Could it be because the abuses that do exist—and there are abuses—could it be that they are the exception rather than the rule? Could it be that we actually have an agricultural policy in this country that has worked so remarkably well that the price of grain, corn and wheat, adjusted for inflation, has dropped 75 percent and 69 percent, respectively, since 1974? Could it be that we have an agricultural policy in this country that has worked beyond anyone's fondest dreams? Could it be that those who put this policy in place actually knew what they were doing? Could it be that one of the reasons for America's remarkable success and agricultural abundance and low food prices relative to every other country in the world is because we have been doing something right? Could that be?

Maybe it is. Maybe that is the real story the popular media has not written or broadcast. Maybe they have failed to see that part of America's success story is America's agricultural

policy—a policy that now can extend not only to food security—and, by the way, has anybody been watching lately what happens when we become dependent on foreign countries for our food supply? Has anybody been watching the questions of food safety from not only food but other products coming from foreign countries?

Is anybody paying attention to the energy opportunity that is in this legislation to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and help further strengthen this incredible country?

It is easy to criticize. It is easy to point the finger. It is easy to castigate. It is easy to act superior. It is hard to produce something that builds a better future for our people. That is hard.

I will just ask those who have been such constant critics: Can't you open your mind just a little bit and acknowledge what is clearly the larger truth? The larger truth is, we have the cheapest food as a percentage of income in the history of the world. The truth is, we have the most abundant and the safest food supplies of any nation in the history of mankind. The truth is, the cost of this program is going down as a share of the total Federal budget—and in the case of the commodity programs, going down dramatically. The truth is, we have an opportunity to improve the energy security for our country. The truth is, we have a chance to strengthen the economy and to make this a much more secure country. Right now, that opportunity is being missed.

Look at this Chamber. This is the Thursday before we are supposed to leave for 2 weeks for Thanksgiving. I hope when people sit around those family tables across America enjoying the bounty of our country, they think, for just a moment: Where did that bounty come from? It did not just come from the grocery store. I am talking about who grew the crops, who raised the livestock, who raised the poultry we are going to enjoy around that dining room table. Where did it come from? How much does it cost in relationship to what others are paying around the world?

What is the further opportunity we have to reduce our dependence on foreign energy? Isn't part of it—a significant part of it—anchored in the rural communities of America, a place where we could help grow our way out of this dependence on foreign energy by producing it right here at home?

I hope Americans will think about this. I hope even some of our critics in the media will think—gee, maybe shouldn't they report the full story? Maybe should just one article talk about the positive things that have happened? I know the good news is not news according to the news media, but I do not know how the American people can be expected to make a fair and objective decision on the merits of this legislation or the food policy of the country if they are not given the whole story—the whole story—not just the

things they can make into a headline and castigate people.

I hope for just a moment our colleagues will reflect: Does this process—here we are, it is Thursday at 12:40 p.m. Eastern time, and I am the only one here, other than the distinguished Presiding Officer, who is a Member of this body.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. And me.

Mr. CONRAD. And Senator NELSON.

Let me say that I hope our colleagues will think very carefully about how we break this gridlock. This does not reflect well on the body. This does not reflect well on the Senate of the United States that we are not able to move forward on legislation that came out of the committee without a single dissenting vote and we have been stuck here for 10 days doing nothing. I hope we are going to prove we are better than this when we return.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wish to say to my colleague from North Dakota what an absolute delight he is to speak with such passion, as he does, about things he knows so much about and how he can explain it in understandable terms.

Farm bills are one of the most complicated things in the world because of the balancing of all the different interests, with these elaborate farm support programs, that you have to have a Ph.D. in mathematics, sometimes, to understand. Senator CONRAD is someone who speaks so eloquently and yet so simply in explaining it. He comes from the land, and he represents a lot of those who earn their living from the land, as does this Senator from Florida.

Most people think of Florida as Disney World and high tech and the space center and so forth. People would be amazed that Florida agriculture is—next to the service industry, which is tourism—just about equal to any other industry as the second largest economic impact interest on our State. Our beef cattle industry is huge. Our citrus industry is huge. So it is with a great deal of passion, like Senator CONRAD, that I take the floor to try to articulate the importance of a farm bill to the people in our State as well as has been articulated by the Senator from North Dakota.

Now, I wish to talk not just about the farm bill. I want to talk about a major amendment that is pending, and that is the Lugar-Lautenberg amendment in taking a completely fresh look at how we protect the Nation's agriculture. I am very happy to be an original cosponsor of this amendment.

No doubt, farmers are facing difficulties. We rely on them for our food. Senator CONRAD said it best: In this time of thanksgiving, as we sit around a table of bounty, we should be grateful we live in a land where our basic food and nutrition is met for most Americans. And I say “most Americans” because some do not.

Because we have an effective farming industry, it demands we continue to be good stewards of the land and the water. We rely on those farmers to persevere during times of natural disaster and uncertainty, where major natural disasters, such as hurricanes, can completely eliminate the citrus crop in Florida, which threatens their very solvency. Then, at the same time, we are asking them not to give in to the pressures, the financial pressures to sell their land for development. This is particularly acute in a State such as Florida where the land value has risen so much that it almost does not make economic sense for the farmers to continue to farm their land.

These farmers are providing our food to our citizens—and not only to America but to the world. We must provide farmers a safety net in the many programs we do here in the farm bill, in other natural disaster bills—a safety net for their times of uncertainty. We have a system that works for many, but this system in a State such as Florida doesn't work for all. In fact, a majority of our Florida farmers are not eligible to participate in a lot of these farm programs that receive the lion's share of the payments in the bill we are going to vote on. This system, as I said, is so complicated it is nuanced. Many of the programs in the farm bill were started as a temporary fix of the immediate problem that the country was facing at the time, but then they get extended time and time again. Then, contrary to their original intent, they become permanent, and some of them have become corrupted—some of those programs—by people who exploit them.

OK. It is time for us to step back and take a fresh look at this and determine how we can best support our farmers. I believe the Lugar-Lautenberg approach I have joined is an amendment that does that. The amendment is going to flow out of the normal farm program and it would provide every farmer in this country who chooses to participate with farm insurance, which would be provided at no cost. Farmers then would have a guarantee that their revenue would reach a certain threshold based on local conditions instead of national standards. This is a remarkable shift from the way we do business now. But it means we eliminate the direct payments to farmers whose land hasn't been farmed in years or who are selling their crops at record high prices. Instead, under this amendment, we are going to provide them with a safety net to fall back on if their farm revenues suddenly drop or if a bad year hits. Guess how much money it is going to save. Upwards of \$4 billion. Even by giving the farm insurance at no cost to the farmer, it is going to save billions of dollars.

The Senate bill we now have on the floor has parts of it that are very good. It increases money for nutrition programs which are going to make a tangible difference in the lives of those on

food stamps. It has a tangible increase for the conservation programs which will make significant strides in protecting our lands and watersheds. But this amendment I am talking about, the Lugar-Lautenberg amendment, goes even further. It fully funds the nutrition programs across 10 years—not just 5 as in the committee bill—and it expands programs such as the simplified summer food program. It accounts for an additional \$150 million each year to provide for school lunches, and some of those school lunches are going to children—hungry children—in the developing world. It increases the conservation spending by \$1 billion. At the end of the day, the amendment saves billions of dollars by taking out the antiquated direct payments program.

My State of Florida has more acres of orange and grapefruit groves than any other State and it ranks among the top five when it comes to growing vegetables, not even speaking about what I already told my colleagues; you would be surprised among the beef cattle industry how big we are. Until this year, the needs of specialty crops such as citrus and vegetables were barely mentioned in farm legislation. The committee bill we are now debating finally addresses this part of agriculture that is so near and dear to our hearts, and so much of a staple for us in Florida, by making tremendous advances in research, pest and disease mitigation, technical assistance, and block grants. I give sincere thanks to Chairman HARKIN and his committee for what they have done, but guess what. The Lugar-Lautenberg amendment goes even further. It provides over \$750 million more to specialty crops and still manages to save \$20 billion. I said \$4 billion earlier. I said billions. That is true. We are talking about \$20 billion of savings in overall support for agriculture by taking this farmers' insurance program at no cost to the farmers.

Specialty crops certainly aren't just important to Florida. Fruits and vegetables are an absolute necessity of healthy eating everywhere, and this Lugar-Lautenberg amendment gives an additional \$200 million to the Women, Infants and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program which makes fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables a part of their daily diets—daily diets of women and young children who can't afford them. Not only is it going to make our children grow up strong and healthy, but it also supports the local farmers. There is also an extra \$250 million in this amendment for a similar program that serves low-income senior citizens.

I have been on this Senate floor time and time again to call attention to the plight of one of our great national, international, and natural treasures: the Florida Everglades. I am happy to tell my colleagues there is an important step in this Lugar-Lautenberg amendment in conserving the endangered Everglades, as it includes \$35

million that can be used to complement efforts undertaken by the State of Florida to restore the northern part of the Everglades system, which is the area that is so located that pollutes so much of the rest of the Everglades as the water flows south, because it is the area north of Lake Okeechobee that is critical to the larger ecosystem further to the south. While this is a small part of what is needed to preserve the overall Everglades and to restore the Everglades, it is another opportunity we can do something about, in helping clean up that water that is flowing into Lake Okeechobee that ultimately flows south into the Florida Everglades.

This amendment is a fresh, effective way of how we can do business in agriculture, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). The Senator from Colorado

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, I come back to the floor this afternoon at 1:35 p.m. eastern time just to remind my colleagues about the importance of the issue we are working on. This farm bill, which is the Farm, Fuel, Security Act, is something that is very important to the future of America.

We are knocking on the door of Thanksgiving for all Americans, where we will all be giving thanks for the bounty we produce in this country for our families and for the lives we live in this wonderful and free America. But without the hard work of farmers and ranchers throughout this country, that very food supply which will give us that great joy during this holiday would not be there.

This is one time every 5 years—one time every 5 years—where the Members of the Senate get to stand up and take stock of the importance of our farmers and ranchers and rural America and the importance of nutrition for our young people in our schools and those who are the most vulnerable, those on food stamps, and the importance of dealing with protecting our land and water and dealing with the future energy supply needs of America. So as we approach this Thanksgiving celebration, it is important for all of us to think back, to reflect upon what is happening in the Senate today.

Some 10 days after we started this farm bill, and after 3 years of hard labor with both Democrats and Republicans to get us to this farm bill, we are now stuck in this procedural impasse we find ourselves in. I think it is a shame that we are where we are. I

think it is a shame that we are not able to move forward.

Last night I heard the majority leader, Senator REID, come to the floor and say: This farm bill is important. Senator REID said: I want to get a farm bill. He said: We will offer, on the Democratic side, to limit the number of amendments to five. With some almost 300 amendments filed on this bill, Senator REID said: We will limit the number of Democratic amendments to five, and we will give you, if you want twice as many amendments, we will give you twice as many amendments. Yet no deal.

Why no deal? Why no deal? Why can't we even agree on a subset of amendments we can debate on the floor and then vote on them and move forward on this farm bill? Is it that there is a slow walk, a stall underway because some Members in this Chamber don't want a farm bill? Are there some Members in this Chamber who do not want a farm bill?

There is a reality, and the reality is that it is possible for us to still get a farm bill. It is still possible for us to get a farm bill. We can move together tomorrow and get 60 votes on the cloture vote. We can have Republicans joining Democrats to get those 60 votes, and then we will move forward with a procedure under the postcloture rules of the Senate to address a series of germane amendments that will improve the bill. So we could still get a farm bill.

The question is, Do the members of the minority in the Senate today want to get a farm bill or do they not? Are the politics being pushed going to triumph over public purpose, which we have tried to address in this farm bill? Are they going to allow politics to triumph over that public purpose?

I would hope not. And I would hope when we come together in the Senate to vote on the cloture motion tomorrow, that there is a resounding yes that we are going to move forward and complete this farm bill; that we are going to enter into the postcloture period where we will address the germane amendments to this legislation, and at the end of the day we will have a farm bill that can be passed and then sent to the President for his signature.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNSAFE IMPORTS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, as the holiday season approaches and par-

ents are buying toys and other consumer products for their children, I would like to put that in the context of what has happened with our economy, what has happened with our trade policy, and what has happened with the breakdown of the part of our Government—the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture—that is there for one simple reason; that is, to protect our people. The Environmental Protection Agency is there to make sure our air and water are clean, the Food and Drug Administration is there to make sure our pharmaceutical supplies and food supplies are safe, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is there to make sure other food coming across our borders and food that is produced in this country is safe, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged by this Congress, by our Government, to make sure our consumer products are safe.

Through the last many years—exacerbated, made worse by the policies of the incumbent, the present administration—we have established a situation that is almost a perfect storm for bad outcomes.

Last year, in 2006, we imported about \$288 billion worth of goods from China. Tens of millions of dollars of those goods were toys, toothpaste, dog food, and other kinds of consumer products. When you buy tens of billions of dollars of consumer products from China, you understand implicitly that those products are made and manufactured and produced in a country that puts little emphasis on safe drinking water, clean air, food safety, purity in pharmaceuticals, and consumer product safety. So when you buy tens of billions of dollars of goods produced in China, you can bet there is a good chance much of their food or ingredients might be contaminated, much of their toys and tires can be defective.

Put on top of that the fact that many U.S. companies go to China as they outsource jobs and they close down production facilities in St. Louis, in Independence, in Kansas City in the State of the Presiding Officer, or in Cleveland, in Dayton, in Gallipolis and Steubenville and Lima in my State. They close down production and outsource these jobs to China.

These American companies then subcontract with Chinese companies to make these products. When they subcontract with these Chinese companies, knowing that production in China is not as safe, either for the worker or for the safety of the product, knowing that production in China can often mean contaminated food products and vitamins and toothpaste and dog food, and at the same time understand those American companies that are subcontracting with these Chinese companies, Chinese subcontractors, the American companies are pushing them to cut costs—you have to cut these costs, you have to cut these corners, you have to make these products cheaper—when

you do that, it should not come as a surprise to Americans, or to our Government, that you are more likely to get tires that are defective, more likely to get contaminated toothpaste or inulin in apple juice, you are more likely to get products that simply don't work as well, and you are more likely to get lead-based paint coating our toys. Why? Lead-based paint is cheaper to buy, less expensive to apply, it is shinier, and it dries faster.

When American companies—without mentioning any names of American toy manufacturers—push their Chinese subcontractors to make it cheaper, to cut costs, to save money for these companies, it is almost inevitable that these products are going to have lead-based paint, are going to have other kinds of consumer safety problems. You have them made in China with a nonexistent safety regulatory mechanism, made by companies subcontracting with United States companies that are telling them to cut costs, and then these products come into the United States.

What happens here? President Bush has weakened the whole regulatory structure. What does that mean? What he has done is dismantled a lot of the protections of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the U.S. EPA, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Department of Agriculture.

Again, why are we surprised when Jeffrey Weidenheimer, a professor at Ashland University in my State, at my request tested 22 toys bought in the local store 10 miles from where I grew up and found 3 of them had excessively, dangerously high lead content? Six hundred parts per million is what we as a country have established as a safe amount of lead—600 parts per million is safe. One of the products he tested, a Frankenstein drinking mug for children, had 39,000 parts per million.

Why does that happen? Because Nancy Nord and the Consumer Product Safety Commission aren't doing their job. They have half the budget they had 20 years ago, and the budget has continued to be cut by President Bush. They have weaker rules, and they have a Consumer Product Safety Commission chair who simply says: We are doing the best we can with what we have. Chairwoman Nord has come in front of the Commerce Committee and said: I do not need a budget increase; things are just fine in my agency. She also has lobbied against the legislation from my seatmate, Senator PRYOR, who has introduced legislation that will strengthen the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The solution to all this, without great detail, is to begin to change our trade policy. So if we are going to buy tens of billions of dollars of toothpaste and dog food and apple juice and other food products and vitamins and toys and tires from the People's Republic of China, from that Communist regime, that also means they are going to have to begin to follow better safety regimens for the products they produce. It

means American companies that import have to be responsible. If you are an American company and you go to China, you hire a subcontractor, and you bring those products back into the United States, it is up to you, in your corporate and your personal responsibility, to guarantee the safety of those products.

It means a better Consumer Product Safety Commission. It means that Nancy Nord should step aside, the Chairwoman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. It means the President of the United States, who has shown little interest in that agency except to weaken and defund it, needs, actually, to appoint four new Commissioners. There are only two there now; they have five spots. The President, for whatever reason, has not replaced them. He needs to appoint a new chair to this Commission. Nancy Nord has shown she is both indifferent to making this Commission work and, frankly, has too great a bias to the companies she is supposed to police. She has traveled with them. She has traveled with them at their expense and done all kinds of things and clearly has not shown any real interest in making our Consumer Product Safety Commission work.

It is up to us as Members of the Senate, Members of the House, this Government—it is up to us. Our first responsibility is to protect our people, and that means in terms of the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the consumer products we use, and the toys that are in our children's bedrooms and playrooms. The road is clear, the road we should drive down. Nancy Nord should go.

Beyond Nancy Nord's resignation, we need the President's attentiveness to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The Senate needs to pass the legislation from Senator PRYOR, and we need to move forward.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMERCE-JUSTICE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I regret to report that the conference committee for the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill has been indefinitely postponed. I wanted to take just a few minutes and say from my point of view why it has been postponed and to express my hope that it can be put back on track soon, in the regular order, and that we can move ahead and deal with it.

The Commerce-Justice appropriations bill includes funding for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It includes appropriations for NASA, for the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Here is what has happened. It is important for my colleagues to know this. The reason the Appropriations Committee conference has been postponed is because the Speaker of the House objects to an amendment which I offered in the Appropriations Committee, which was adopted by the committee, adopted by the full Senate, and which the House of Representatives instructed its conferees to approve. I have been told that unless I agree not to bring the amendment up in conference, the conference will not meet.

Let me describe the amendment. I believe most Americans will be surprised to learn what its subject is. The amendment I offered in the Senate Appropriations Committee is an amendment to make clear that it is not against the Federal law for an employer to require an employee to speak English on the job. Let me say that again. My amendment, which was adopted by this Senate, was to make it clear that it is not against the Federal law for an employer to require an employee to speak English on the job. That was adopted by the Appropriations Committee. Among those voting for it were the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator BYRD, and the ranking Republican member, Senator COCHRAN. When it went to the House, there were two votes on it, but the second vote had the House, as a majority, instructing its conferees to agree with the Senate position and make it the Federal law.

Why did I offer such an amendment? I offered the amendment because the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a Federal agency, has determined that it is illegal for an employer in this country to require employees to speak in English while working. As a result, the EEOC has sued the Salvation Army, for example, for damages because one of the Salvation Army thrift stores in Boston required its employees to speak English on the job. The EEOC says this is a discrimination in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It says, in effect, that unless the Salvation Army can prove this is a business necessity, it can't require its employees to speak English.

In plain English, this means that thousands of small businesses across America—the shoe shop, the drugstore, the gas station—any company would have to be prepared to make their case to the Federal agency—and perhaps hire a lawyer—to show there is some special reason to justify requiring their employees to speak our country's common language on the job. I believe this is a gross distortion of the Civil Rights Act, and it is a complete misunder-

standing of what it means to be an American.

I do not say this lightly. Since the 1960s, in Tennessee, at a time when it was not popular, I have supported, I believe, and voted for, when I have been in a position to do it, every major piece of civil rights legislation that has come down the road from the early days. I believe in that passionately. I remember the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act and all those important pieces of Federal and State legislation which have made a difference to equal rights in our country. But I cannot imagine that the framers of the 1964 Civil Rights Act intended to say that it is discrimination for a shoe shop owner to say to his or her employee: I want you to be able to speak America's common language on the job. That is why I put forward an amendment to stop the EEOC from filing these lawsuits.

That is why the Senate Appropriations Committee agreed on June 28 to approve my amendment. That is why the full Senate on October 16 passed a bill including my amendment. That is why the full House of Representatives voted to instruct its conferees to agree with the Senate on November 8. That is why, I believe, that the Senate-House conference on this appropriations bill should include the amendment in the conference report so it can become law.

Let me step back for a minute and try to put this small amendment in a larger perspective. Our country's greatest accomplishment is not our diversity. Our diversity is magnificent. It is a source of great strength. Our country's greatest accomplishment is that we have turned all that magnificent diversity into one country. It is no accident that on the wall above the Presiding Officer are a few words that were our original national motto: E Pluribus Unum, one from many, not many from one.

Looking around the world, it is worth remembering that it is virtually impossible to become Chinese, or to become Japanese, or to become German, or to become French. But if you want to be a citizen of the United States of America, you must become an American. Becoming an American is not based on race. It cannot be based upon where your grandparents came from. It cannot be based upon your native religion or your native language. Our Constitution makes those things clear. In our country, becoming an American begins with swearing allegiance to this country. It is based upon learning American history so one can know the principles in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

The late Albert Shanker, the head of the American Federation of Teachers, was once asked what is the rationale for a public school in America? He answered: The rationale for public schools is that they were created in the late part of the 19th century to help mostly immigrant children learn the three Rs and what it means to be an

American, with the hope that they would go home and teach their parents the principles in the Constitution and the Declaration that unite us.

Our unity is based upon learning our common language, English, so we can speak to one another, live together more easily, and do business with one another. We have spent the last 40 years in our country celebrating diversity at the expense of unity. It is easy to do that. We need to spend the next several years working hard to build more unity from our magnificent diversity. That is much harder to do. One way to create that unity is to value, not devalue, our common language, English. That is why in this body I have advocated amendments which have been adopted to help new Americans who are legally here have scholarships so they can learn our common language.

I have worked with other Members of this body on the other side of the aisle to take a look at our adult education programs which are the source of funding for programs to help adults learn English. There are lines in Boston and lines in Nashville of people who want to learn English. We should be helping them to learn English. We could not spend too much on such a program.

That is why with No Child Left Behind, one of the major revisions we need to do is related to children who need more help learning English, because that is their chance in their school to learn our common language, to learn our country's principles and then to be even more successful.

Not long ago, before Ken Burns's epic film series on World War II came on television, my wife and I went to the Library of Congress to hear him speak and to see a preview of the film. He was talking, of course, about World War II and that period of time. It was during World War II, he said, that America had more unity than at any other time in our history, which caused me to think, as I think it must have caused millions of Americans to think: What have we done with that unity since World War II? Our pulling together since then, our working as one country has been the foundation of most of our great accomplishments.

That is the reason we have the greatest universities, that is the reason we have the strongest economy, that is the reason we still have the country with the greatest opportunity. Quoting the late Arthur Schlesinger, in Schlesinger's 1990s book which was called "The Disuniting of America," Ken Burns told us that: Perhaps what we need in America today is a little less pluribus and a little more unum.

I believe Ken Burns's quote of Arthur Schlesinger is right about that. One way to make sure we have a little more unum, a little more of the kind of national unity that is our country's greatest accomplishment, is to make certain we value our common language, that we help children learn it, that we help new Americans learn it,

that we help adults who do not know it to learn it, and that we not devalue it by allowing a Federal agency to say it is a violation of Federal law for an employer in America to require an employee to speak English on the job.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MAKING EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand that the majority may move to proceed to the supplemental bill passed by the House last night. That bill imposes at least two policy restrictions that will compel a veto: directing the readiness standard the Defense Department must follow before a unit may be deployed, and expanding the interrogation procedures established in the Army Field Manual over to the intelligence community.

The House bill will also compel the immediate withdrawal of forces, regardless of what General Petraeus's orders may be. Petraeus has established a reasonable timeline for the transition of mission and drawdown, and, frankly, we ought to support him. The Marine expeditionary unit identified by General Petraeus in September for withdrawal has left Iraq, and an Army brigade is headed home over the next month.

CLOTURE MOTION

Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 484, S. 2340, the troop funding bill. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2340, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008.

Mitch McConnell, Saxby Chambliss, Bob Corker, Wayne Allard, Thad Cochran, John Cornyn, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Lisa Murkowski, Orrin Hatch, Richard Burr, Trent Lott, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Chuck Grassley, Jon Kyl, Norm Coleman, Mel Martinez.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Secretary Gates stated clearly yesterday that the Army and Marine Corps will run out of operating funds early next year. This funding shortfall will

harm units preparing for deployment and those training for their basic missions. We should not cut off funding for our troops in the field, particularly at a moment when the tactical success of the Petraeus plan is crystal clear. Attacks and casualties are down. Political cooperation is occurring at the local level. We should not leave our forces in the field without the funding they need to accomplish the mission for which they have been deployed.

The Pelosi bill, if it was to get to the President's desk, of course, would be vetoed, as was the supplemental bill sent to the President earlier this year that contained a withdrawal date. Because we have a responsibility to provide this funding to our men and women in uniform as they attempt to protect the American people, we need to get a clean troop funding bill to the President.

There is no particular reason to have all the votes that are likely to be coming our way tomorrow. I have indicated repeatedly to the majority leader—and we have at the staff level—that we would be more than happy on this side of the aisle to move both the farm bill cloture vote and whatever cloture vote or votes we end up having on the troop funding issue up to today. I hope there is still the possibility of doing that. I know Members on both sides of the aisle, in anticipation of the 2-week break, have travel plans. I am all for staying here longer if it makes sense, but under this particular set of circumstances, it doesn't make sense.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise to speak about the importance of the farm bill. I also wish to express the same deep concern about what is happening on process in the Senate, as so many of my colleagues and the majority leader have. This is the second week we have been trying to pass a food and energy security bill that is important for every community. The process that has gone on, frankly, since the beginning of the year, is one of delay, slow walking, and filibusters over and over again.

Yesterday, I showed a chart that read "52 filibusters so far this year." Tomorrow we have potentially three more votes to close off filibusters. One relates to funding on the war that is tied to a policy change the majority of Americans want to have happen to move our men and women out of the middle of a civil war, to refocus us instead on the critical areas of counterterrorism, training, support for Americans who remain, those things the majority of Americans want to see happen. We have to stop a filibuster on